October 28, 2009

Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket Nos. 09-47, 09-51, and 09-137; Comments of Connected Nation, Inc. in response to NBP Public Notice # 12

Dear Ms. Dortch,

In response to NBP Public Notice #12, please find attached a document containing a summary of Connected Nation research and activities relevant to FCC proceedings 09-47 (International Comparison and Consumer Survey Requirements in the Broadband Data Improvement Act); 09-51 (A National Broadband Plan for Our Future); and 09-137 (Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability To All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as Amended by the Broadband Data Improvement Act) that seek, in part, to support and build upon the need for libraries across the country to offer high speed Internet connections within their communities.

Sincerely,

Laura Taylor
Chief Policy Officer
Connected Nation, Inc.

Attachment

Connecting America through Broadband at the Library:
A Connected Nation® Policy Brief

On October 5, 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation filed with the Federal Communications Commission a cost model and cost estimates of providing fiber optic connectivity to anchor institutions, such as libraries (GN Docket Nos. 09-47, 09-51, and 09-137). The research that Connected Nation has gathered for this report supports and builds upon the need for libraries across the country to offer high speed Internet connections within their communities, and it demonstrates the critical role that libraries play in connecting America's unconnected. As the FCC considers the potential impact of community anchor institutions in the national broadband plan, it should encourage and support improved broadband infrastructure for libraries.

In 2009 Connected Nation conducted surveys to better understand the role of libraries as a community technology hub.[1] In brief, the findings indicate that libraries are vital in filling an access void in local communities where the library is most often the only source of free Internet availability. According to Connected Nation findings, these library Internet users tend to be more assertively building skills through online learning opportunities, classes and training resources, improving employability through job searches and resume building, searching for healthcare information and communicating with care givers, and engaging with government online. Further, these library Internet users tend to represent more vulnerable segments of the population (e.g. low-income single parents) who will surely find themselves even more starkly separated from the digital "haves" if their library connectivity disappears or declines.
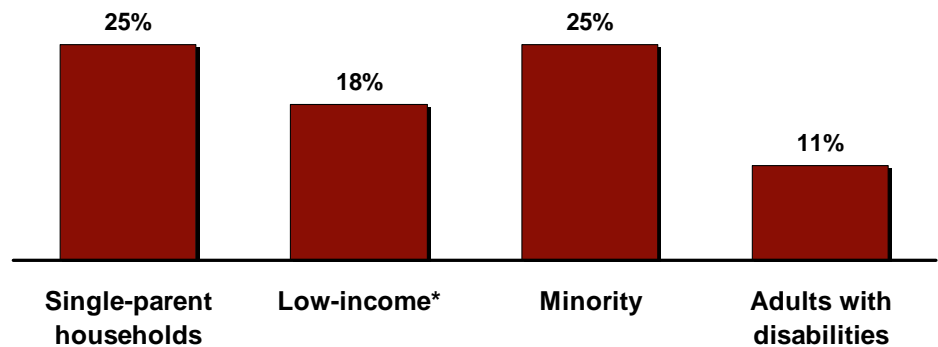
Key Findings

- Significant percentages of those who normally don't subscribe to broadband – specifically single parents, minorities, and low-income residents – are relying on the local library as their sole or primary Internet resource: 25% of single parents, 25% of minorities, 18% of low income residents, and 11% of people with disabilities depend on libraries for Internet connections

- More than one-half of library Internet users (51%) have children at home, suggesting that a significant portion of library Internet users are children. Of this group, 42% do not have a broadband connected computer at home.

- Library Internet users are significantly more likely than other Internet users (those who connect at home or elsewhere) to use a number of online applications related to workforce development and education, civic engagement, and healthcare.
    - Nearly half of library Internet users (46%) search for jobs online, compared to 29% of other Internet users
    - Library Internet users are significantly more likely than other Internet users to communicate online with local government officials (25% compared to 14%)
    - 28% of library Internet users communicate online with healthcare professionals, compared to 16% of other Internet users

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The Importance of Library Internet Connections for Vulnerable Populations

The study finds that individuals who access the Internet at the library are more likely than other Internet users to be members of traditionally disadvantaged populations who are less likely to adopt broadband.[2] Libraries are critical access points for both single parents and minorities. One quarter (25%) of all single parents as well as one quarter (25%) of minorities rely on libraries for Internet access. Among other demographics, 18% of low-income residents and 11% of people with disabilities depend on their local library for access to the Internet.

Percent of each demographic group using the Internet at their library
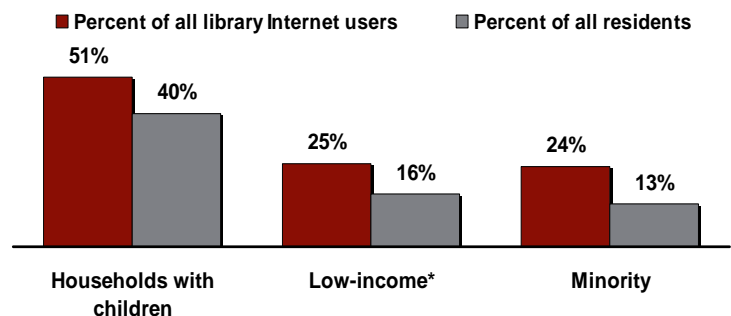

n=2,400 residents of Tennessee and Ohio

*Low-income=annual household incomes below $25,000

Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

Demographics of Library Internet Users

Upon examining the demographic make-up of library Internet users, three demographic groups stand out with significantly higher representation than average. The share of Internet library users who are minority, have annual household incomes below $25,000, or who have children living at home, is each significantly larger than in the population as a whole. More than one-half (51%) of library Internet users have children at home, suggesting that a significant portion of those who use the Internet at their library are children. Further, 25% of library Internet users are low-income, and 24% represent minority populations. In all three groups, these percentages are significantly higher than in the population as a whole, suggesting that Internet access at the local library is especially important for parents and children, low-income residents, and minorities.

Percent of library Internet users compared to all residents, by demographic

n=2,400 TN and OH residents, 300 of whom access the Internet at their local library

*Low-income=annual household incomes below $25,000

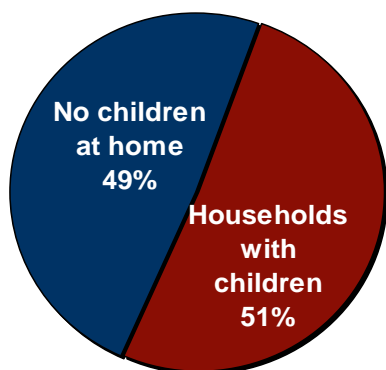Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

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[2] See Consumer Insights to America's Broadband Challenge. Connected Nation, October, 2008.
http://connectednation.org/research/Americas_Broadband_Challenge.php#at

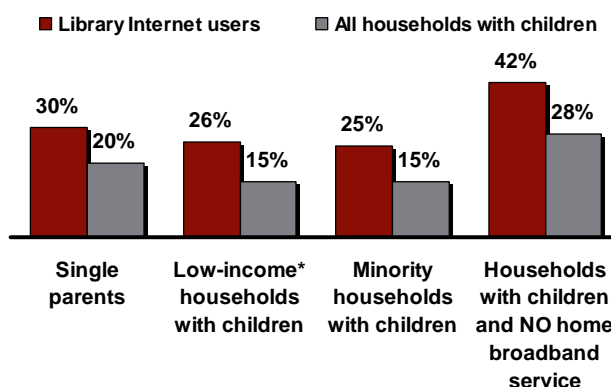# The Importance of Library Internet Connections for Children

As previously noted, among those adults who use the Internet at their local library, more than one-half (51%) have children at home. This finding suggests that a significant portion of library Internet users are children. Of these library Internet users with children at home, 30% are single parents, 26% have annual household incomes below $25,000, and 25% are minority parents. Of particular note, 42% of these library Internet users with children have no broadband connection at home, suggesting that the library serves as the primary broadband source for more than four out of ten parents and children who use their local library for the Internet.

Among all library Internet users

No children at home 49%

Households with children 51%

n=996 TN and OH residents with children living at home, 138 of whom use the Internet at the library

Percent of households with children
(by demographic)

■ Library Internet users   ■ All households with children

Single parents	Low-income* households with children	Minority households with children	Households with children and NO home broadband service
30% / 20%	26% / 15%	25% / 15%	42% / 28%

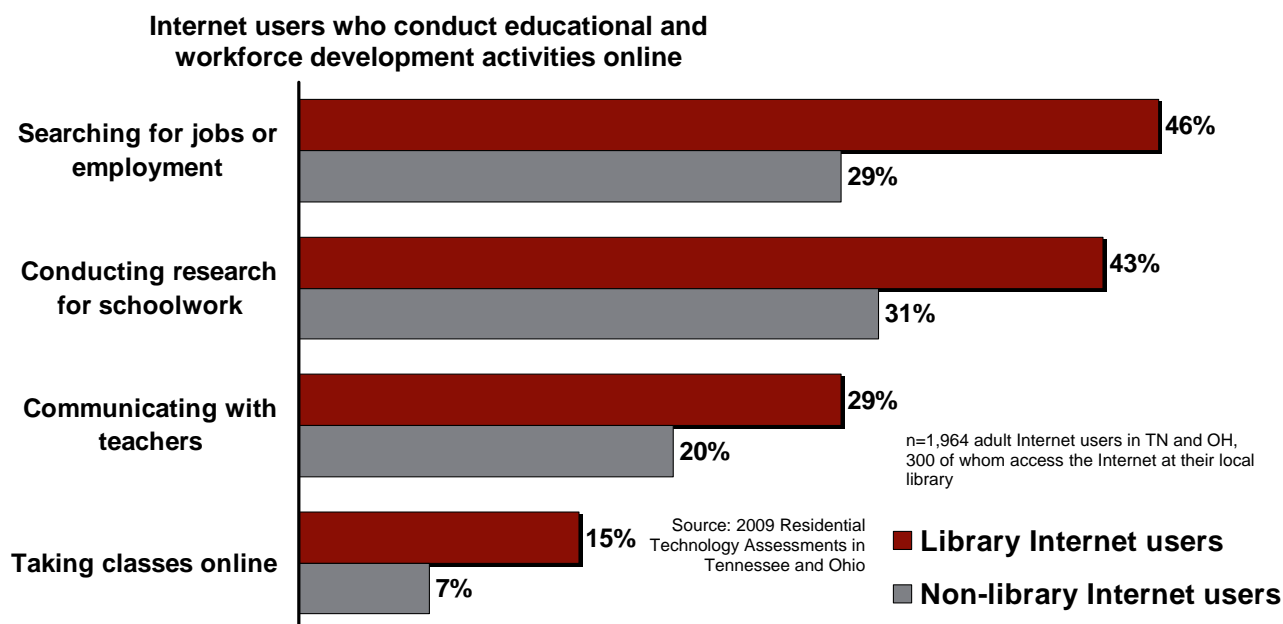*Low-income=annual household incomes below $25,000

Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

Libraries: Providing Opportunities through Broadband Connections

Connected Nation's survey found that library Internet users are more likely than other Internet users to use online applications that help improve their quality of life. Across the board, library Internet users are statistically more likely than other Internet users to employ broadband for education, workforce development, civic engagement and communicating with healthcare professionals.

Library Internet Users: Finding Jobs and Furthering their Education
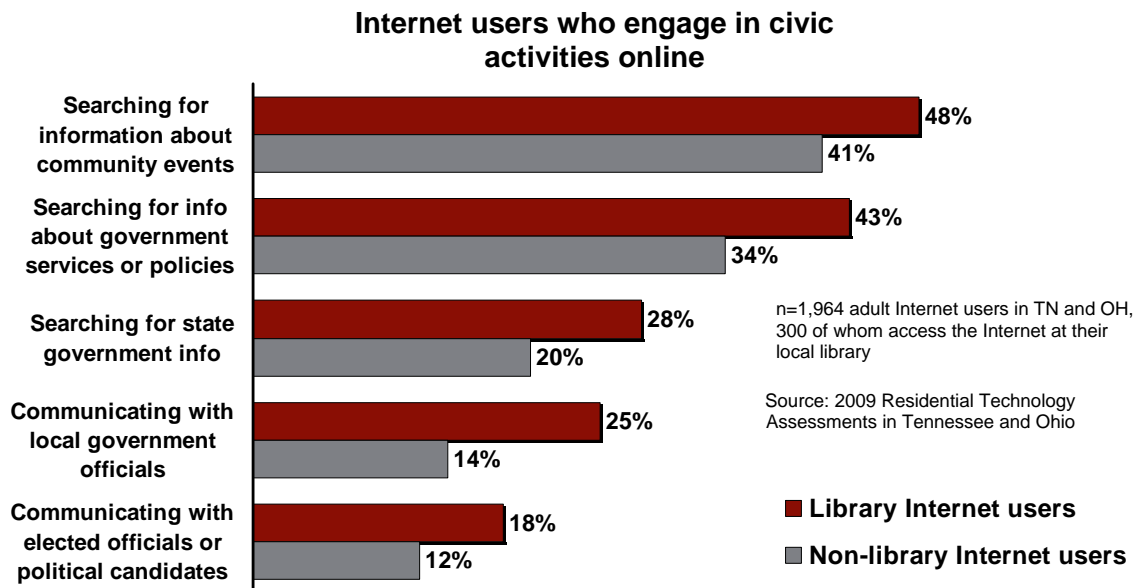
The survey found that library Internet users are more likely than other Internet users to use the Internet for improving their education and finding employment. Nearly half of library Internet users search for jobs online, compared to 29% of other Internet users. Library Internet users take online classes more than twice as often as other Internet users, and library Internet connections are also used frequently for completing homework and communicating with teachers.

Internet users who conduct educational and workforce development activities online

Activity	Library Internet users	Non-library Internet users
Searching for jobs or employment	46%	29%
Conducting research for schoolwork	43%	31%
Communicating with teachers	29%	20%
Taking classes online	15%	7%

n=1,964 adult Internet users in TN and OH, 300 of whom access the Internet at their local library

Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

■ Library Internet users
■ Non-library Internet users

Libraries are meeting an essential community need by helping community residents find work, as well as improve their job skills to increase their productivity and help provide job security.
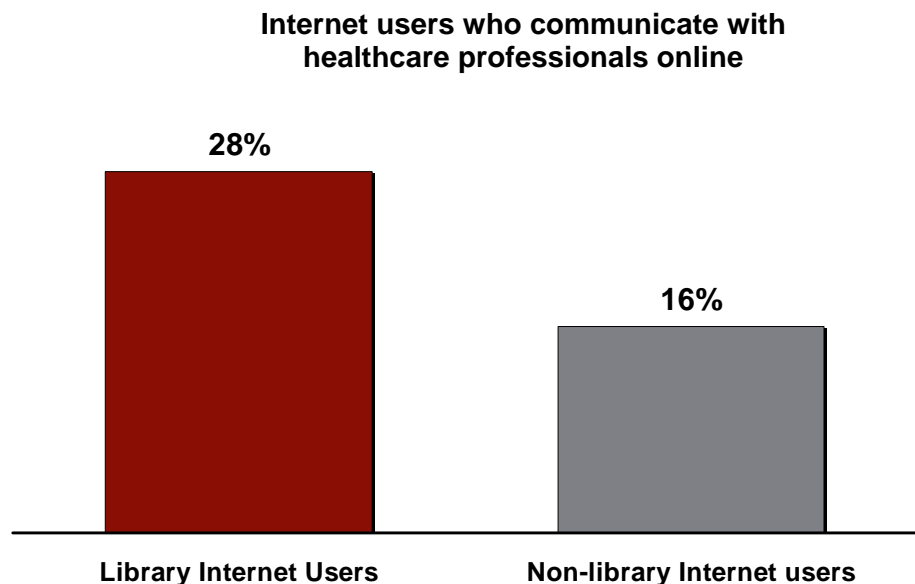
Library Internet Users: Engaging Government Online

Library Internet users are more likely to depend on the Internet as an enabler and resource for civic engagement and information. Of particular note, library Internet users are nearly twice as likely as other Internet users to communicate online with local government officials.

Internet users who engage in civic activities online

Activity	Library Internet users	Non-library Internet users
Searching for information about community events	48%	41%
Searching for info about government services or policies	43%	34%
Searching for state government info	28%	20%
Communicating with local government officials	25%	14%
Communicating with elected officials or political candidates	18%	12%

n=1,964 adult Internet users in TN and OH, 300 of whom access the Internet at their local library

Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

■ **Library Internet users**
■ **Non-library Internet users**

Library Internet Users: More Assertive in Accessing Online Health Resources

Library Internet users are more likely than other Internet users to participate in online healthcare activities such as communicating with doctors or healthcare professionals (28% vs. 16%). Broadband Internet access is a critical part of the ability to access timely and accurate health information.

Internet users who communicate with healthcare professionals online

Library Internet Users	Non-library Internet users
28%	16%

n=1,964 adult Internet users in TN and OH, 300 of whom access the Internet at their local library

Source: 2009 Residential Technology Assessments in Tennessee and Ohio

Improving Library Access Improves Lives

Connected Nation's findings in this report show that significant percentages of traditionally vulnerable populations – particularly single parents, minorities, and low-income residents – are relying on their local library as an Internet resource to search for jobs, further their education, engage in civic activities and access healthcare information. These individuals are less likely to have broadband connections at home, but through their local libraries, they are gaining access to broadband applications for improving their lives and becoming healthier, more productive citizens.

Connected Nation is working to address library connectivity through its involvement in a pilot study initiated by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. *Opportunity Online* is a grant program that is working to improve and sustain high-speed Internet access in local libraries. Connected Nation is a proud partner of this initiative and to date has participated in *Opportunity Online* Summits in seven states across the county. The *Opportunity Online* Summits convene leaders of library systems with public and private supporters of broadband in libraries to create strategies for improved and sustained connectivity.

Connected Nation is committed to supporting the push to sustain library connectivity. A companion video for this report is available at http://connectednation.com/_documents/LibraryApps_102809_FINAL.ppt. This video provides personal testimonies from libraries and library patrons who offer first-hand accounts of the importance of library connectivity. Additionally, a file containing the charts discussed in this report are available in PowerPoint format here http://www.youtube.com/connectednation.

www.connectednation.org